

Hawaii Business College Commencement Speech

Good Afternoon and Aloha!

President Omori, distinguished faculty, proud parents, honored guests and graduates...let me say that I am very honored to share this occasion with you and your families.

First, the good news: The Hawaii Business College has a NINETY-SEVEN PERCENT (97%) job placement rate. Congratulations . . . that's all your parents needed to hear today, and now they are very relieved!

For many of you, today is the accumulation of a lifelong dream finally realized and my advice to you is not to waste it.

I know that many of you sit here today wondering what the future holds. When you watch the news or read the paper, you are constantly bombarded with reports of rising unemployment rates, corporate lay-offs and a market that seems attached to the end of a yo-yo.

To this -- I say relax!

I can with confidence -- tell you today -- that this will not always be the case. As many of you have probably experienced or learned, the economy is like almost everything in our world -- in that it is in a continuous state of change.

Change is constant and it is something you will never escape. Many of you graduating today are wondering what changes are about to take place in your lives. For some of you, change is a scary prospect. It is scary because it represents *that* which you cannot foresee or completely control, and yet change will have a decisive effect on your life and the lives that you are responsible for.

Yet, I impress upon all of you to embrace CHANGE and attack it with vigor!

We live in an age that is unlike any in modern history. We live in a world where our daily lives and society in general are changed in less than a generation. The world we see today is significantly different than the one of five (5) years ago, and it will not be the same five (5) years from now.

History has taught us that those unequipped, unprepared and unwilling to accept and adapt to changes will be left behind. It is a lesson far too often failed.

Hawaii Business College and your professors *have equipped you -- and prepared you* for what lies ahead. Now you must be **WILLING to apply those skills and lessons you learned in the classrooms to the next chapter in your lives. At the same time, you must be willing to adapt to change. We stand in a moment of time when all is possible, but only if you have the fortitude to embrace and adapt to the changes around you.**

The diploma you are about to receive is not a free pass to the job of your dreams. It is an investment in your future.

For those leaving Hawaii to pursue your dreams on the mainland or abroad, I say Aloha and best wishes. May you be safe and may your road lead you back home our special State.

To those of you who are staying here in Hawaii, -- I say thank you. As much as your education is an investment for you, -- **YOU are an investment for Hawaii – and it is a wonderful investment!**

In whichever industry that you apply yourselves to, you must play your part in guiding and shaping the future of this great state.

Let me continue by sharing just four more pieces of advice:

First: Be Pro-active and Resilient

The world is only interesting if you engage it. Nothing in this world will be handed to you on a silver platter. You must be willing to go out and get what you hope to achieve. Desire and expect to succeed. Have faith in yourself, knowing that you are prepared. And if you happened not to like the outcome of your work – adapt to it, make the necessary adjustments, and attack the next challenge with the same vigor, and you will achieve a better result.

In 1998, some friends and colleagues of mine set out to change the State by electing a new kind of leader to be our Governor. We knew in our hearts that she would be the kind of leader Hawaii needed. As it already has been well documented, the odds were against us, and we were always reminded that we did not have a chance. We came close, but lost. But we didn't give up. We

learned from our mistakes, adapted and made the necessary changes needed to be successful. Four years later in 2002, we succeeded, and Linda Lingle is now the Governor of this fine State.

Today, as the Director of the State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, I have the golden opportunity to make positive changes for our state. Each day, I wake up thinking, how can we make our State better? I try to lead by example, with enthusiasm, hard-work, and a “can-do” attitude. When there is a challenge before us, I direct my team – my manager and employees - to focus our energy on how we can accomplish the task, rather than finding excuses and reasons why it cannot be done.

As business graduates you are expected to be leaders in the industry you join, which brings me to my next piece of advice.

Be Loyal and a Team Player

Loyalty breeds confidence and trust. Whether you decide to work for a multi-million dollar company, a small business, or decide to start your own business, you must be able to work as a team. You cannot be a success by doing it alone.

In today’s business world, employers expect you to be more than just an individual contributor -- they want team players.

Companies are looking for employees who can work as a team and is loyal to the people they work with. Companies want the ability to leverage talent and broaden their effect.

You must have the ability to work well with others and contribute to a group, and be willing to sacrifice personal interests or glory for the welfare of all. If not, personal growth and full-time employment will be tough to find.

Instill Honesty and Ethics

Recently, the business community has been rocked both nationally and here at home. Accounting practices, mismanagement at the senior levels and illegal campaign contributions from corporate accounts have brought a new level of scrutiny upon ethics in business.

A rule of thumb - - If it does not feel right, don't do it. Success and peace of mind is gained by living up to the values of honesty and being accountable for your own actions. Do the right thing.

Take Time to Make Our Community a Better Place

You are here today because of many sacrifices made by your grandparents, parents, family and other people in the community. In order for us to continue to make our community a better place, we must continue to invest in it.

I encourage you to get involved in community activities and actively participate in an organization of your choice. Whether you join an organization that is helping the homeless, finding a cure for deadly a disease, or whether you are volunteering as a coach on a children's soccer or little league team – it really does not matter. The fact that you have taken time from your busy schedule to help someone and make our community a better place will make all the difference in the world. You will be grateful for it.

I would like to leave you with one last thought

There is no substitute for hard work. Worthwhile things will come to you, if you are willing to plan carefully, make the sacrifices and work hard. You all have the skills and abilities to be a success and a leader in our great State and our great Country. Congratulations and Best Wishes to all of you.

It's been an honor to be here with you. Aloha.